



**Danbury Nurses' Union Unit #47, Local 5047
Aft-CT, AFT Healthcare, AFL-CIO**

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**Testimony of Mary Consoli, President
Danbury Nurses' Union Unit #47, AFT Connecticut Local 5047
In Support of Senate Bill 1191, An Act Concerning Public Disclosure of Hospital
Staffing levels for Patient Safety
March 14, 2007**

Good Morning. I am Mary Consoli, President of the Danbury Nurses Union. On behalf of the nurses I represent, I want to thank Senator Handley, Representative Sayers and members of the Public Health Committee for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 1191, legislation to require hospitals to make staffing information available to the public.

Today, every product made has a label that lists all its contents, from a gallon of milk to a gallon of laundry detergent to lawn care products. There are labels on items that warn consumers that use of this product may be hazardous to your health. Would any one in this room buy a car not knowing all the features covered by the list price? Yet we all spend our healthcare dollars not knowing if we are getting the most for our money. How do you measure the quality of care you or your loved ones are getting, if you are a patient in a Connecticut hospital? What tools do you have to make a comparison? Staffing levels are a great indicator of high quality care.

Hospitals have tremendous latitude when determining staffing levels for patient care, yet healthcare consumers today do not have the opportunity to objectively compare and evaluate the care they will receive among different hospitals. You have the opportunity to change that with Senate Bill 1191.

Since the 1990's, hospitals have been cutting staff to cut costs, the result has been to drive the remaining nurses and other care givers from the bedside creating serious staffing shortages. Studies have demonstrated what nurses have long reported

anecdotally: understaffing threatens patient safety, undermines the quality of care and is not cost effective.

- The Joint Commission on Accreditation of healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) reports that inadequate nurse staffing has been a factor in 24% of cases involving accidental death, injury or permanent loss of function reported since 1997.
- A landmark study by nursing researchers at the University of Pennsylvania found that with each additional surgical patient above four that a nurse is required to care for, the likelihood of death within 30 days of hospital admission is increased by 7%.
- A 2002 study by Solucient, a health care information resource for hospitals, found that nurse-staffing ratios explained nearly 11% of the variance in mortality rates among over 2,00 hospitals studied.

Consumers should have access to information that enables them to make informed decisions about their health care especially, if that decision could be a matter of life or death. By giving the public the right to know staffing levels in a hospital they can make comparisons as well as informed decisions about their quality of care for themselves and loved ones.

Senate Bill 1191 takes a critical first step toward assuring our patients their families and our communities that they will get safe and effective care in Connecticut hospitals. This legislation will improve ones ability to evaluate existing staffing levels in our hospitals as well as the measures hospital use to provide safe staffing.

If we require hospitals to monitor and report their staffing levels, we will see a systematic improvement in staffing levels that will help reduce our healthcare costs and increase positive patient outcomes. I urge you to support Senate Bill 1191.

Thank you.